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BOOK DEPARTMENT.

REVIEWS.

Massachusetts, Its Historians and its History: An Object Lesson.

By CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS. Pp. 110. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1893.

The drama of modern history as Mr. Adams sees it, consists in the "Emancipation from Superstition and Caste, with its two underlying principles of Religious Toleration and Equality before the Law." "So far as Equality before the Law is concerned—personal, civil liberty—the record of no community seems to me more creditable, more consistent, nor, indeed, more important, than that of the community composing the Commonwealth of Massachusetts." Always in the van in the struggle for civil liberty, as respects religious toleration, Massachusetts has made for herself a far different record, a record "in degree only less discreditable than that of Spain In Spain it was the dungeon, the rack and the fagot; in Massachusetts it was banishment, the whip and the gibbet. In neither case can the records be obliterated. Between them it is only a question of degree,—one may in color be a dark drab, while the other is unmistakably a jetty black."

It is this oft-repeated comparison of Massachusetts and Spain as champions of religious intolerance which constitutes the most striking feature of Mr. Adams's book. His criticism of the historians is that they have been so biased by a kind of ancestor-worship, or "filio-pietism," that their record is untrustworthy, and for the most part needs to be rewritten from the beginning. So far has this "filio-pietistic" spirit been carried that what is branded as infamous in Spain, is presented as not only necessary but beneficent in Massachusetts. The historian of Massachusetts, Mr. Adams insists, should divest himself of all filial and patriotic bias, and apply the same canons of criticism to Massachusetts as to England and Spain. Massachusetts history naturally divides itself into "four distinct periods: (1) the period of settlement, extending from 1620 to 1637; (2) the theological, or glacial period, extending from 1637 to 1760; (3) the period of political activity and organization, extending from

1765 to 1788; and (4) finally, the scientific, or florescent period, extending from 1788 to 1865, at first slow, then rapid in its movement."

At the present day there will be no dispute with Mr. Adams as to the spirit in which Massachusetts history should be written; but a careful reading will hardly find that spirit in all parts of this book, much of which seems an attempt to justify analogies not less strained than striking. It is no new discovery that the Puritans were intolerant, nor has the treatment which that topic has received from recent historical writers been characterized by "filio-pietism." But to place the intolerance of the fathers of Massachusetts on the same plane with that of Philip II. is by no means historically justified. So far as this intolerance grew out of the same religious bigotry, it deserves the same condemnation. But in Massachusetts the intolerance arose hardly more from religious than from political causes, which were non-existent in the European countries, and these political causes are as much slighted by Mr. Adams as Puritan bigotry has been by the writers whom he is criticising. This is seen in his reference to the Robert Child petitioners.

In Jonathan Edwards Mr. Adams finds a figure that can be worked into his picture effectively, but this is done only by distorting certain features till the likeness becomes almost a caricature. While one phase of his thought is presented in great detail, the other equally characteristic one receives no attention. The two themes of Edwards' preaching were the divine justice and the divine *love*. Almost side by side with the horrible descriptions of the hereafter, with which Mr. Adams fills his pages, are passages of the most winning tenderness. To say that the God whom Edwards preached "was a horrible fetich, a demon of injustice, vengeance and wrath; and of a cruelty of disposition at once infinite and insatiable," gives an utterly perverted view of this great preacher. The power which Edwards exercised over his generation was not that of a mere terrorist.

The second period of Massachusetts history Mr. Adams characterizes as the "theological or glacial," and forthwith the "theological glacier," which settled down upon Massachusetts with the passing away of the first generation of leaders, is made the cause of all the sterility which marks the period. This causal relation can be asserted only when it is proved that other causes were not operative at the same time and contributing to the same result. To call attention to the fact that this period "was in the mother country a fruitful season, for it began with Milton and closed with Johnson," does not prove that it would have been equally fruitful in Massachusetts, but for the presence of the "glacier." When Mr. Adams comes to consider art, he recognizes that the environment was by no means favorable to

its development. "Unquestionably the material and moral circumstances of early New England—a plain people struggling for existence in a poor wilderness—were not favorable to any development of the art side of nature. Their lives were to the last degree matter of fact, realistic, hard." Is this the kind of soil from which "the poem, the essay, the work of fancy and fiction" naturally spring?

This little book will serve an excellent purpose in calling attention to the "personal equation" of which the student must take account in examining the work of the earlier Massachusetts historians. It is an excellent antidote for "filio-pietism." Yet throughout there is apparent the spirit of the advocate rather than of the historian. The argument of the book seems to be keyed up to analogies and characterizations which are far more striking than just. Had Massachusetts history been written only as it is here outlined, there would be hardly less need for iconoclastic historians than Mr. Adams finds to-day.

GEORGE H. HAYNES.

The Distribution of Wealth. By JOHN R. COMMONS. Pp. 258. New York and London: Macmillan & Co. 1893.

It is difficult to see why this book should be called the "Distribution" of wealth any more than its production or consumption. It is in fact a succinct treatise on the general principles of political economy and would deserve to be so called much more than do most works that bear this title, since these usually quite neglect the "political" aspect. On the contrary it is the special merit of this work that it gives full prominence to this important side of the subject. Instead of treating industry as something wholly self-regulating, it shows that the laws of trade constantly operate under the overshadowing power of law and the State. "There are in society two lines of economic activity, the voluntary activity of individuals and associations, and the compulsory activity of government. The first is the field of free competition and self-interest; the one hitherto solely treated by the English economists. The second is the field of coercion—of force." He does not mince this aspect of the case simply because the idea of coercion is somewhat distasteful to those who boast of being freemen, but shows that, however mildly and imperceptibly law may operate, it is at bottom coercive; not only so, but the natural economic activities of society could not go on unless this forcible arm of the law were constantly stretched out to protect them. Those whose habit it is to inveigh against the action of government are the very ones who owe most to it, because they are the holders of franchises which the law protects them in.